



For Immediate Release:

November 1, 2020

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Death of COVID-19 Positive Man Incarcerated at MCF-Stillwater Reported by Minnesota Department of Corrections

Bayport, Minn.— Today, at 11:06 AM, a 61-year-old man incarcerated at the Minnesota Correctional Facility-Stillwater in Bayport, Minn., died at the facility.

The man, whose identity is being withheld pending full notification of next of kin, tested positive for COVID-19 on October 20. On Saturday, the man, who had an extensive medical history, was transported to an area hospital where he was evaluated and discharged. The Ramsey County Medical Examiner will perform an autopsy to determine the manner and cause of death. This is the third COVID-related death of an incarcerated person in Minnesota state correctional facilities since the pandemic began.

“We extend our deepest condolences to the loved ones of this man,” said Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) Commissioner Paul Schnell. “Since the beginning of this pandemic we’ve worked to take all reasonable steps to minimize the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the state’s correctional facilities for the well-being of those we serve and our staff,” he added.

The DOC has conducted comprehensive testing of all incarcerated people and staff in our facilities. The first case of COVID-19 in the Stillwater facility was not reported until late September. The speed of COVID case spread at Stillwater is uncharacteristic of the experiences to date at other facilities that have experienced outbreaks.

Currently 1,278 men are incarcerated in the Stillwater facility. To date, over 750 of those have tested positive for COVID, with the majority experiencing no symptoms. In addition, over 150 Stillwater staff have tested positive for COVID-19.

“We want to acknowledge the commitment of Stillwater staff who have provided exceptional service to the men in our custody despite the risks presented by COVID-19,” said Stillwater Warden Guy Bosch.

The growth in spread at Stillwater has been different than in any other facility in the system to date. It is notable that the Stillwater facility did not have a single confirmed COVID case until late September, which was the start of the current outbreak. We continue to investigate whether facility age, design, and infrastructure may influence the spread of COVID-19 and other viral infections, such as the flu. To date, we have:

- Been meeting with the MN Department of Health to discuss mitigation strategies and protocols.
- Been performing regular COVID-19 testing of staff and incarcerated men who have not tested positive.

- Increased nursing/health services staffing to check for symptoms and more quickly respond to acute concerns.
- Implemented a facility lockdown to minimize further spread.
- Doubled the flow of outside air into the heating system.
- Continue to explore all other response and mitigation options.

For a comprehensive list of the significant measures MCF-Stillwater has taken to reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 spreading, see: <https://mn.gov/doc/about/covid-19-updates/mcf-stillwater-covid-19-response/>

The DOC has taken measures across the system to manage the risk of COVID-19 entering correctional facilities and spreading, including: implementing “Stay with Unit” plans, enacting mandatory barrier mask policies, and installing handwashing stations in each facility. Each facility has also taken a number of steps specific to their unique environment. Those plans can be viewed here: <https://mn.gov/doc/about/covid-19-updates/facility-specific-covid-19-responses/>

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